

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 170757Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2153
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DIA WASHDC
JCRC BARBERS PT HA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 23067

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, CASC, VS
SUBJECT: DEBRIEFING OF VIET-NAM RETURNEES: PART V: THE DEPARTURE

REF: STATE 187104

SUMMARY: THE VIETNAMESE APPARENTLY HOPED THAT THOSE DEPARTING
THEIR COUNTRY WOULD HAVE GOOD WORDS TO SAY ABOUT THEIR TREAT-
MENT. END SUMMARY.

1. IT MAY BE INTERESTING TO NOTE THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH
THE FORTY-NINE AMERICANS AND DEPENDENTS WHO ARRIVED IN BANGKOK
AUGUST 1 WERE PERMITTED TO LEAVE VIET-NAM. A NUMBER OF THEM
WERE "INVITED" TO VISIT THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE ON JULY 5 TO
"SOLVE SOME PROBLEMS". UPON ARRIVAL, OFFICIALS--THROUGH
NORTHERN WOMEN CADRE WHO INTERPRETED--HANDED THEM EXIT VISAS
DATED TWO DAYS PREVIOUSLY. AFTER RACING AROUND THE SEVENTEEN
PLACES (IN MIKE MIELKE'S CASE) WHERE THEY NEEDED TO OBTAIN
TAX CLEARANCE, THEY CHECKED THEIR BAGGAGE ON JULY 8 AT
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THE DOWNTOWN AIR VIET-NAM OFFICE FOR DEPARTURE THE FOLLOW-

ING DAY. AFTER CHECKING THE BAGS, MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WERE INFORMED THEY WOULD NOT BE DEPARTING AS SCHEDULED. MIELKE BELIEVES THIS WAS DUE TO VIETNAMESE DESIRE NOT TO HAVE AMERICAN LEAVE ON THE SAME PLANE AS THE EXPELLED EUROPEAN MISSIONARIES. IN MOST CASES, OUR PEOPLE HAD NOT COMPLETED THEIR PAPERWORK, ANYHOW. THEY THEN DEPARTED THREE WEEKS LATER.

2. SOME OTHERS WERE HANDLED DIFFERENTLY. ANDREW KAJI WAS CALLED TO SAIGON FROM VUNG TAU ON JUNE 23 TO RECEIVE AN EXIT VISA DATED JULY 20, 1975. THE AUTHORITIES HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN PREPARING FOR HIS DEPARTURE. PAUL HORTON WAS RELEASED FROM JAIL ONE OR TWO DAYS BEFORE AUGUST 1. HERMAN MCDONALD, RETURNING HOME FROM HIS WORK AT A RICE MILL NEAR LONG XUYEN JULY 30, FOUND A SHINING MERCEDES WHICH HAD BEEN SENT FROM SAIGON TO GET HIM PARKED IN HIS FRONT YARD, WITH OFFICIALS SITTING INSIDE HIS HOUSE "INVITING" HIM TO COME IN AND HEAR THE NEWS OF HIS DEPARTURE. HE WAS THEN DRIVEN UP TO SAIGON IN HANDCUFFS, ALLOWED TO TAKE NO BAGGAGE WITH HIM.

3. A NUMBER OF PERSONS MENTIONED RECEIVING A NICE TALK FROM IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS BEFORE LEAVING, WHO IMPLIED THAT THEY HOPED THOSE DEPARTING WOULD TELL THE PRESS GOOD THINGS ABOUT THEIR STAY IN VIET-NAM. THE TWO HAWAIIANS, KAJI AND Y.L. CHING, AGREED THAT, DURING THEIR JULY 31 SESSION AT IMMIGRATION AT WHICH, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE VIETNAMESE SERVED THEM TEA, OFFICIALS MADE THREE POINTS: (A) IF THEY WERE HARRASSED AT ALL BY SECURITY OR OTHER OFFICIALS, THEY WOULD HAVE ONLY TO REPORT IT TO IMMIGRATION, WHICH WOULD TAKE CARE OF IT; (B) IF THEY WANTED TO DISPOSE OF ANY HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES, THEY SHOULD GO AHEAD AND DO SO; THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM (THIS WAS CONTRARY TO NORMAL PROCEDURES); AND (C) IF THEY WISHED FOR ANY RELATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THEM TO THE AIRPORT, THEY COULD SIMPLY OBTAIN A PASS FOR THEM (THIS WAS CANCELLED AT THE LAST MINUTE, ALTHOUGH WE KNOW OF AT LEAST ONE EXCEPTION THAT WAS MADE). THIS TARDY MESSAGE WAS CLEARLY ONE OF WILLINGNESS TO BE HELPFUL, THE SOURCES AGREED.

4. THERE WERE PEOPLE AT TAN SON NHUT FILMING THE PASSENGERS.
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THE PHOTOGRAPHERS WERE THOUGHT TO BE VIETNAMESE AND SOVIETS.

5. ONE OF THOSE SEEING THE GROUP OFF WAS MAJOR NGUYENPHUONG NAM, PRESS OFFICER UNDER COLONEL DUONG DINH THAO, SAIGON'S DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. NAM TRIED TO ELICIT MAURICE BAUHAHN'S VIEWS AS TO WHAT HE OR OTHERS IN THE GROUP WOULD SAY ABOUT THEIR TREATMENT IN VIET-NAM, WHETHER THE COMMENTS WOULD BE UNFAVORABLE. BAUHAHN SAID HE REPLIED, "BUT

YOU HAVE BEEN NASTY TO SOME OF OUR PEOPLE," TO WHICH NAM ADMITTED THAT SOME OFFICIALS HAD NOT BEEN NICE "BUT WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES". HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE HOPED THE USG "WILL SEE HOW GOOD WE'VE BEEN TO YOU". HE REPEATED TO BAUHAHN WHAT OTHERS HAD TOLD HIM PREVIOUSLY, THAT THE USG HAS NOT BEEN RECIPROCATING VIET-NAM'S GESTURES. BUAHAHN VOLUNTEERED THAT HE BELIEVES THE FLIGHT WAS A DEFINITE SIGN OF VIETNAMESE FRIENDSHIP TOWARD THE U.S., ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT KNOW TO WHAT END IT WAS INTENDED.

6. BAUHAHN REPORTED THAT NAM ALSO INQUIRED WHAT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CARTER WAS LIKE. NAM'S TONE WAS MORE OF "CURIOSITY" THAN "OPTIMISM".

7. IN ANY CASE, VIETNAMESE ATTEMPTS TO PUT ON A GOOD IMAGE AT THE END OF THE AMERICANS' STAY WERE LARGELY NEGATED FOR A NUMBER OF THEM BY THE THOROUGH BODY SEARCHES THE VIETNAMESE CONDUCTED AT THE AIRPORT.
WHITEHOUSE

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